

Coburn Amendments to Emergency War Supplemental

Amendment 648 – Removes \$100 million emergency appropriation for the 2008 Republican and Democrat Party Nominating Conventions

The 2007 emergency war supplemental bill contains a \$100 million “emergency” appropriation for security costs associated with hosting the Republican and Democratic Parties’ 2008 Presidential Nominating Conventions. The amount would be split between St. Paul, Minnesota and Denver, Colorado, which will be hosting the conventions, and is intended to reimburse state and local law enforcement.

Political Party Conventions Are Not Emergencies

The Republican and Democratic Presidential Nomination Conventions are nearly a year and a half away. Any federal funds that may be needed to reimburse state and local law enforcement for security costs should be provided through existing grants or through the regular appropriations process.

This was the precedent set for security at the 2004 conventions.

Security costs for the 2004 host cities—New York and Boston—were reimbursed through two appropriations bills:

H.R. 4613, the Fiscal Year 2005 Department of Defense appropriations bill (Public Law 108-287) which provided \$50 million for discretionary grants under the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs for reimbursement to State and local law enforcement entities for security and related costs, including overtime, associated with the 2004 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions.

H.R. 2673, the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 108-199) which provided \$50 million to the "Office of Justice Programs--State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance" for discretionary grants under the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs for reimbursement to State and local law enforcement entities for security and related costs, including overtime, associated with the 2004 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions.

According to the requirements for federal emergency funding the following criteria must apply.

CRITERIA-

(1) IN GENERAL- For purposes of this section, any provision is an emergency requirement if the situation addressed by such provision is-

(A) necessary, essential, or vital (not merely useful or beneficial);

(B) sudden, quickly coming into being, and not building up over time;

(C) an urgent, pressing, and compelling need requiring immediate action;

(D) subject to paragraph (2), unforeseen, unpredictable, and unanticipated; and

(E) not permanent, temporary in nature.

(2) UNFORESEEN- An emergency that is part of an aggregate level of anticipated emergencies, particularly when normally estimated in advance, is not unforeseen.

Evaluated against these criteria, this funding is not sudden, urgent, pressing, requiring immediate action, unforeseen, unpredictable, or unanticipated. In fact, political parties have hosted Presidential nominating conventions every four years since 1832. While 2008 will be the second Presidential election since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this bill would make it the first to require emergency funding for the parties' candidate nominating conventions.

Winning the War on Terror is an Emergency; Planning a Party is Not

It is a stretch to rationalize why \$100 million for political party conventions belongs in an emergency appropriations bill intended to provide the funding to secure and stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan and winning the war on terror.

The \$100 million in emergency funds for the political party conventions could be spent to protect our troops in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. This amount could pay for:

- 31,797 sets of body armor
- 658 up-armored humvees
- 529 up-armored ambulance humvees.

Instead, Congress will use a bill intended to cover the costs of winning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to add \$100 million to our nation's debt that already exceeds \$8.7 trillion.

Federal Funding Is Already Planned for the Conventions

The Department of Justice did not request the \$100 million contained within this bill to reimburse state and local law enforcement.

The Administration has, however, budgeted \$15,812,000 for the Secret Service to provide security at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

Furthermore, each Convention has been designated a National Special Security Event, making security personnel eligible for millions of federal dollars to cover their expenses

No Security Plans Have Been Finalized

“Although security officials have discussed many logistical details, a security plan hasn't been finalized. Jeff Larson, acting executive director of the host committee, said a security consultant will be hired by his committee and the” Republican National Committee, according to the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*.

The war supplemental bill states “That of the amount made available under this heading, \$100,000,000 shall be for reimbursing State and local law enforcement entities for security and related costs, including overtime, associated with the 2008 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions.”

The definition of “reimburse” is “to pay back; refund; repay.” Yet what is really being done by this bill is to provide an advance payment that could exceed what the true costs might be.

With no security plan or cost estimate of such a plan, it is difficult to determine how the costs associated with convention security could be determined at this time.

The 2008 Cities Are Smaller and Less Costly to Secure Than the 2004 Host Cities But Are Receiving the Same Reimbursement

Jeff Larson, acting executive director of the GOP host committee in St. Paul, noted that New York and Boston, which hosted the parties' 2004 conventions, got \$50 million apiece. This is the same amount that would be provided to St. Paul and Denver by this bill.

New York City needed more than 10,000 officers to secure convention events and delegates in 2004.

St. Paul will be one of the smallest cities ever to host such a large event. Assistant St. Paul Police Chief Matt Bostrom said early estimates are that up to 4,000 officers might be needed for the GOP convention.

This is less than half as many officers, yet the St. Paul would receive the same amount of federal financial support for security if the provision in this bill became law.

Bostrom concedes that there is no guarantee that Congress will make the same appropriation for security expenses as in 2004, when the first conventions after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were held.

The basis for determining why both Denver and St. Paul should get \$50 million seems to be solely tied to the fact that that same amount was given to the host cities in 2004.

New York City and Boston have much different security needs than St. Paul and Denver, so why should the same dollar amount be given to each of these cities?

The Hosts Have Agreed to Pay for Security Not Funded By Congress

The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reports that “there is general agreement among officials that any money needed for security that is not appropriated by Congress will have to come from money raised by the host committee.”

Cities Benefit Financially for Hosting a Nominating Convention and Therefore Should Be Expected to Pay Some of the Cost

Cities compete to host political conventions because of the economic and public relations boost derived from drawing together thousands of party members and media.

The 2004 Republican National Convention netted about \$255 million in economic benefits for New York City after taking into account the \$86 million lost because of destruction in the city, according to the New York City Economic Development Corporation. That net figure was \$5 million greater than Mayor Michael Bloomberg estimated.¹

Boston enjoyed an estimated windfall of \$156 million while hosting the Democratic National Convention in 2004, according to a study by the Beacon Hill Institute of Suffolk University done after the convention. (The study claimed that the net benefit was \$14.8 million after accounting for lost business from tourists who avoided Boston during the convention.)²

The GOP convention could bring \$150 million to the Twin Cities, according to a release from Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak.³

Denver business leaders are expecting that the Democrat Convention “will mean a more than \$160 million boon for the city.”⁴

The Denver Host committee’s Website boasts an expected \$150 to \$200 million in “economic benefits” gained from hosting the convention.⁵

A host city also receives an incalculable PR benefit because of the international attention given to a national political convention.

The Taxpayer Is Already Paying a Large Portion of the Cost of the Political Conventions and Presidential Campaigns

The 2004 Presidential candidates spent more than \$1 billion according to the Federal Election Commission,⁶ of which \$150 million was from public financing.

¹ <http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2006/07/26/68639>

² http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/08/10/convention_benefit_negligible_study_says/

³ <http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2006/07/26/68639>

⁴ http://www.denverpost.com/ci_4992906

⁵ http://www.nytimes.com/cq/2006/12/13/cq_2037.html

⁶ FEC website

The Federal Election Commission has reported that \$172 million was spent on the nomination conventions in 2004, with \$30 million of that coming from public financing.⁷

While contributions to presidential campaigns and the national parties are limited by law, unlimited private donations are allowed for conventions.⁸

⁷ FEC website

⁸ <http://capitaleye.org/inside.asp?ID=223>

2004 Convention Security Funding

H.R. 4613

Fiscal Year 2005 Department of Defense appropriations bill

Public Law 108-287

108th Congress

General Provisions

Sec. 11002. In addition to amounts otherwise made available in this Act, \$50,000,000, is made available upon enactment for "Office of Justice Programs--State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance" for discretionary grants under the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs for reimbursement to State and local law enforcement entities for security and related costs, including overtime, associated with the 2004 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions, to remain available until September 30, 2005: Provided, That from funds provided in this section the Office of Justice Programs shall make grants in the amount of \$25,000,000 to the City of Boston, Massachusetts; and \$25,000,000 to the City of New York, New York.

H.R. 2673

2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act

Public Law 108-199

108th Congress

Sec. 103. In addition to amounts otherwise made available in this Act, for "Office of Justice Programs--State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance" for discretionary grants under the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs for reimbursement to State and local law enforcement entities for security and related costs, including overtime, associated with the 2004 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions, \$50,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2005.

USA TODAY

August 29, 2004

http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/president/2004-08-29-lobbying_x.htm

Lobbyists' lure to GOP: 'Indulge yourself'

By Jim Drinkard, USA TODAY

NEW YORK — On Tuesday night, a few fortunate Republicans attending the party's convention will have a chance to try on "the most exclusive and prestigious jewels in the world" at the Cartier Mansion on the edge of New York's Diamond District.

The point is not only to "indulge yourself," as an invitation says. It's also to honor a Republican congressman from Texas, Henry Bonilla, at a cocktail reception under chandeliers that sparkle almost as brightly as the diamonds and emeralds beneath them.

The event is hosted by a group of Washington lobbyists who hope to reinforce their ties with Bonilla, a powerful chairman of a House appropriations subcommittee. It's but one among more than 200 lavish parties being thrown this week by corporations, lobbyists, trade groups and other interests whose fortunes rise and fall on the actions of government policymakers. They are taking advantage of New York's bounty of interesting event sites, from the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid to the 56th floor panorama of the Sky Club on Fifth Avenue.

While similar events were held at the Democratic convention in Boston last month, the New York partying will be more purposeful for one reason: "The Republicans are the majority party. They run the administration, they run the House, they run the Senate. So anyone who wants to talk to them is there," says David Hoppe, a lobbyist at the Washington firm Quinn Gillespie & Associates. "It is a good time to see people and establish personal relationships

Some of this week's events at the Republican convention:

- Welcome reception for party donors aboard the USS Intrepid, an aircraft carrier in the Hudson River with a view of the Manhattan skyline from its flight deck.
- Golf tournament for donors at the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester County.
- Brunch for Senate candidate John Thune of South Dakota aboard the Enterprise V, Amway Corp.'s gleaming, 165-foot, blue-and-white yacht.
- Space Jam 2004 party for House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas at Studio 450.
- Dinner for the staff of the House and Senate commerce committees at Blue Water Grill, one of Manhattan's most popular restaurants with a sultry downstairs jazz room.
- A Metropolitan Museum of Art reception for Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee at the Temple of Dendur, an Egyptian temple dating to 15 B.C.
- A Yankee Stadium fundraiser at the Yankees-Indians baseball game for Rep. Jerry Weller of Illinois. Tickets: \$1,500, or two for \$2,500.
- Breakfast at Tiffany's with Libby Pataki, wife of the New York governor.
- The Republican Governors Association Rocks the Planet at Planet Hollywood in Times Square.
- Martina McBride concert for Georgia's congressional delegation at the Roseland Ballroom.

Among the hosts for Bonilla's bash are the Wine Institute, which represents California vintners; Christine Pellerin, a former Bonilla aide who lobbies on appropriations matters; and UST, whose tobacco and wine interests fall under the jurisdiction of Bonilla's agriculture subcommittee. Bonilla is just one of many committee chairmen and members of the House and Senate leadership who will be feted at what may be the most expensive round of receptions, dinners, concerts, golf outings and cruises ever at a political convention.

"The entry fee for participation has gone up dramatically," says David Rehr, president of the National Beer Wholesalers Association, who is contributing either beer or money to help sponsor nine parties this week. To get top billing as a sponsor for an elaborate event can cost \$100,000 or more; lower-level sponsorships are available for \$50,000 or \$25,000.

Rehr attributes that at least in part to a new campaign-finance law that bars corporations, unions and trade groups from giving big checks known as "soft money" to the political parties. Staging lavish parties "is now the only legitimate outlet for soft money," he says. "People have this pool of money and want visibility, or to show their commitment or loyalty, and to advance the reputation of a particular member (of Congress) or cause. So the parties are more lavish, the venues are bigger, the bands are bigger names than ever before."

Top sponsorship for a Wednesday night benefit concert at Rockefeller Center costs \$250,000. The event is being organized by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee for his World of Hope foundation, which seeks to alleviate AIDS and other health problems in Africa. Frist's aides declined to name top sponsors.

The longest-running convention party is the one being thrown all four nights of the convention to honor Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. It's at the Tunnel, a former nightclub on Manhattan's West Side.

The party-every-night tradition goes back to the GOP's San Diego convention in 1996, where nightly bashes for Boehner — then a member of the House leadership — got a reputation as the best events in town. Boehner's lobbyist friends replicated it at a Philadelphia warehouse in 2000 and are doing it again this year. The effort is led by Bruce Gates, a lobbyist for Washington Council Ernst & Young, a firm whose client list includes employers such as General Electric, Ford, AT&T and Verizon.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois was the honoree at a reception Sunday afternoon sponsored by General Motors at Tavern on the Green, a glittering Victorian gothic restaurant on the edge of Central Park. The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States threw a reception at the New York Yacht Club for Rep. Thomas Reynolds of New York, chairman of the party's House campaign committee. And AT&T, Chevron Texaco, Target and Time Warner were among the sponsors of a martinis-and-bowling night for House Rules Committee Chairman David Dreier of California.

AT&T also is among the sponsors of a Tuesday "Texas Honky Tonk for Joe Barton," the Texas congressman who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Barton's panel has wide jurisdiction over telecommunications, health and energy. And members of the House Financial Services and Senate Banking committees will be toasted at Madame Tussaud's Tuesday night, sponsored by JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs.

Koch Industries, a Kansas-based oil company, is putting on a reception Thursday for Sen. George Allen of Virginia at the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center. BellSouth, Coca-Cola, Home Depot, UST and the Southern Co. are throwing a late-night party on Wednesday for Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Saxby Chambliss of Georgia at the Supper Club in midtown Manhattan.

Among the busiest sponsors this week will be the American Gas Association, a trade group that represents 192 local natural gas utilities. They're putting on at least nine shindigs, from a "Wildcatter's Ball" honoring Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to a "Wild West Saloon" with the Charlie Daniels Band for Rep. Richard Pombo of California, chairman of the House panel that oversees natural resources.

All of it provides lobbyists with an efficient way to do their work. "You go (to the convention) with a targeted plan of who you need to see, and you can get a lot of work done," says Scott Reed, a Republican lobbyist and political strategist. Approaching policymakers in a social setting puts them more at ease, he says, "unlike in Washington, where you are normally coming to ask a favor or to help get somebody out of trouble."

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MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL
THE MINNESOTA DAILY
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July 26, 2006

Twin Cities vies for national convention

A selection committee will examine the metro for suitability Aug. 13-15.

By Jim Hammerand

The Twin Cities is on the short list to host the Republican or Democratic presidential nominating conventions in 2008, and the University could end up lending a hand.

A convention could have mixed economic effects on the region. Thousands of visitors to the cities - including delegates, media, politicians and support staff - would cause an influx of money in the cities.

That sudden population boost, in addition to increased security measures, also could tie up traffic and discourage locals from going to work, as was the case in Boston in 2004.

University spokesman Dan Wolter said the Greater Minneapolis Convention and Visitor's Association have been "particularly interested in housing options on campus" in discussions with the University.

"It would be hard to have a major national event such as one of these conventions in the Twin Cities without the U of M playing a role," Wolter said.

Further details of the University's involvement are unavailable, as discussions are still under way.

Wolter called the timing of the conventions a "logistical challenge," but also a "rare opportunity" for the University and students.

"This is an enormously challenging time for the 'U' as the (Democratic) convention would be just a week before school starts - and the (Republican) convention would be after classes have started," he said.

A convention could bring \$150 million to the Twin Cities, but the figures are hard to nail down, according to a release from Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, who, with St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, has been working to appeal to teams scouting locations for the conventions from both parties.

Coleman spokesman Bob Hume said the cities have worked together "wonderfully" to attract a convention.

Part of the difficulty of estimating the impact a national convention would have on the Twin Cities is that it doesn't happen very often.

The last and only presidential nominating convention in Minnesota was in 1892, when Republicans nominated the Benjamin Harrison and Whitelaw Reid ticket. They were defeated by Democrats Grover Cleveland and Adlai E. Stevenson.

Since then, conventions have become "a one-week blitz on the area," said Stan McMillen, assistant director of the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis.

The 2004 Republican National Convention netted about \$255 million in economic benefits for New York City after taking into account the \$86 million lost because of destruction in the city, according to the New York City Economic Development Corporation. That net figure was \$5 million greater than Mayor Michael Bloomberg estimated.

Boston did not fare as well, according to researchers at Suffolk University's Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research. They tallied the economic impact of the 2004 Democratic National Convention and compared it to pre-convention estimates.

The report said that while Boston Mayor Thomas Menino predicted \$154 million in economic benefits, researchers provided a "less optimistic" estimate of \$14.8 million barely more than a week after the convention.

"Boston basically got shut down," McMillen said, because of increased security measures that snarled interstates and kept workers home.

Still, a convention could bring as many as 30,000 people to the Twin Cities, McMillen said, resulting in an economic "shot in the arm."

"They're going to spend money in the area," McMillen said. "My guess is that every hotel, bed and breakfast and motel within walking distance is going to be booked.

"The downside: Obviously, since 9/11 security is much more expensive than it was before ... there's a lot more of it."

GOP spokesman Aaron McLearn said there are no specific security requirements set for conventions. The federal government likely would reimburse local and state authorities for much of the security costs.

The selection committee, which will be in Minnesota Aug. 13 to 15, determines how well it could serve a convention: There should be a main arena with seating for 20,500 people, about 20,000 hotel rooms in the city and ample parking, meeting space and office space.

While Minnesota's potential as a swing state has figured prominently in recent elections and campaigning, McLear said it won't factor too heavily into whether a national convention is held here.

"They're mostly looking at business decisions: What's the best place for us to discuss our agenda, to showcase our nominee," McLear said, "but as far as the political potency of the state, I'm not sure if that's what they're necessarily looking at."

The Democratic National Committee will announce its choice in November or December, and the GOP will make its decision in January.

Because Minneapolis and St. Paul only can host one of the conventions, Hume said the city would go to the first party to call dibs.

But either party's convention, Hume said, would be good for the region, "filling hotels from Minneapolis to St. Cloud to Stillwater."

Star Tribune
March 13, 2007

St. Paul GOP extravaganza gets security funding status The Special Security Event status for the '08 National Convention means detailed planning may begin.

By Myron P. Medcalf and Randy Furst

Next year's Republican National Convention has been designated a National Special Security Event, making security personnel eligible for millions of federal dollars to cover their expenses, St. Paul officials said Monday. But questions remain about who would control an appropriation and how large it might be.

Some St. Paul officials believe a contract they signed with the local host committee -- a private fundraising committee and liaison between the city and Republican National Committee (RNC) -- gives them control of federal funding for the convention. Others believe the federal government can give fiscal authority to any entity.

Meanwhile, although security officials have discussed many logistical details, a security plan hasn't been finalized. Jeff Larson, acting executive director of the host committee, said a security consultant will be hired by his committee and the RNC.

Assistant St. Paul Police Chief Matt Bostrom said early estimates are that up to 4,000 officers from around the metro area might be needed for the convention. More than 45,000 members of the news media, delegates and protesters are expected.

Larson said "4,000 could be an accurate number, but until someone puts it all together, we are not sure."

He said that Minnesota's U.S. senators, Republican Norm Coleman and Democrat Amy Klobuchar will be working with the U.S. senators from Colorado on a bill seeking appropriations for the GOP convention and the 2008 Democratic convention, which will take place in Denver.

Larson noted that New York and Boston, which hosted the parties' conventions in 2004, got \$50 million apiece and said he doesn't expect the amount of money needed to drop.

"We would like to get it passed as soon as we can," he said.

Bostrom said there is no guarantee that Congress will make the same appropriation for security expenses as in 2004, when the first conventions after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were held.

Nonetheless, there is general agreement among officials that any money needed for security that is not appropriated by Congress will have to come from money raised by the host committee.

Bostrom said he doesn't think more officers from outstate or outside Minnesota will be needed. But he cautioned that no one should assume that security detail plans are final.

And others aren't so sure there are enough officers to simultaneously police the convention and the state.

"There's probably not enough police officers in the metro area, probably not in the state" to handle the workload, said Ramsey County Commissioner Tony Bennett, a former St. Paul police officer.

New York City needed more than 10,000 officers to secure convention events and delegates in 2004.

St. Paul, with about 600 officers, will be one of the smallest cities ever to host such a large event.

Denver wins Democratic National Convention, beating out NYC

By George Merritt and Chris Osher
Denver Post Staff Writers
Denver Post

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National Democrats announced today that they have picked Denver over New York for the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

"The initial euphoria and excitement was joined by anxiety about how much work we have to do," said Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper.

Denver's selection brings the high-profile political gathering to the Pepsi Center in August 2008 -- exactly 100 years after the city hosted its first and only national party convention. About 35,000 delegates and journalists are expected for what business leaders hope will mean a more than \$160 million boon for the city.

"There is no question that the West is important to the future of the Democratic Party," Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean said in a release. "The recent Democratic gains in the West exemplify the principle that when we show up and ask for people's votes and talk about what we stand for, we can win in any part of the country. Additionally, we have a number of strong Democratic leaders in the West who will be a part of showcasing the vision of Democratic leadership for America as we introduce the next Democratic President in the Rocky Mountains."

"I really believe that this is going to be a tremendous economic tool for our city," said host committee fundraiser Willie Shepherd.

"Our city will be showcased to an international audience for the next 18 months," he said.

The decision comes after problems with both the Denver and New York bids forced the Democratic National Committee to delay its choice for weeks.

Chairman Howard Dean had planned to pick a city before 2007. But just as an announcement was expected, Denver hit "a possible deal-breaker" when a local union refused to promise not to strike during the convention.

Just as Denver was realizing its problems, New York - which rested the strength of its bid on its financial clout - announced it likely could not raise the money.

For months politicians and other officials from Montana to New Mexico have pushed Denver's bid for the convention as a way of tapping a new political resource for the Democrats. Chairman Dean's decision comes as an acknowledgement of his party's potential in the West.

Locally, city officials are touting the victory as the Mile High City's next stair-step toward becoming a major U.S. city.

Democrats had to weigh the city's maturity against its political potential in making the choice. In the months-long campaign for the convention, Denver was often a sentimental favorite, but the practicality of holding a large convention in a city of about 550,000 people created skepticism.

Questions about whether Denver officials could convince party leaders that the Denver community could raise the necessary millions of dollars and provide thousands of hotel rooms lingered throughout.

By contrast, New York's rival bid for the convention was grounded in its reputation as a convention regular and a financial juggernaut. The city has hosted five conventions since Denver last did, including the 2004 Republican

National Convention.

But enthusiasm for the convention in New York waned as 2007 approached. In early January, Mayor Michael Bloomberg told reporters "we're just not in the business of paying for" conventions, according to the New York Times.

Staff writer George Merritt can be reached at 303-954-1657 or gmerritt@denverpost.com.

New York Times

December 13, 2006

http://www.nytimes.com/cq/2006/12/13/cq_2037.html

Democrats Still Weighing Where to Hold '08 Convention

By Rachel Kapochunas

[Democrats](#) with 2008 on their minds will have to wait a bit longer to learn whether their party will hold its presidential nominating convention in Denver or in New York City. While a site selection announcement was widely expected to have been made by now, DNC spokesman Damien LaVera said Wednesday that “a final decision has not been made.”

But LaVera added that party officials likely are not going to put that decision off much longer, stating that the choice of which city will host the convention — to be held Aug. 25-28 in 2008 — is likely to come before Jan. 1.

The [Republican National Convention](#) got the jump in the convention sweepstakes in September by naming the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolis as the location for its 2008 convention, to be held Sept. 1-4.

The Twin Cities also had competed for the Democratic convention, but the GOP's preemptive move forced the Democrats to drop Minneapolis-St. Paul from its short list of finalists.

That left just New York City — a 2008 also-ran to again host the GOP convention, as it did in 2004 — and Denver in the running for the Democratic convention. A fourth finalist city, New Orleans, dropped its bid in July, citing financial and logistical difficulties.

The Democratic faceoff pits Denver — a relative novice at hosting conventions, but a key city in a fast-growing Mountain West region that increasingly is a partisan battleground — against New York City, one of the most seasoned convention hosts and a Democratic Party stronghold of long standing.

Denver has hosted one convention, exactly 100 years earlier: The Democrats picked William Jennings Bryan of neighboring Nebraska, whose third and final bid as the party's presidential nominee ended in his defeat by Republican William Howard Taft.

By contrast, New York City has a long hosting history, having been home to five Democratic and the 2004 Republican conventions.

Most of those occurred over the past three decades: The nation's most populous city hosted the 1976 and 1980 Democratic conventions that nominated [Jimmy Carter](#), the 1992 convention that sent Democrat [Bill Clinton](#) to his first White House term, and the 2004 Republican convention at which President Bush was renominated.

Denver officials contend their city is the right choice not only because of its own assets, but because of the potential of a convention in the Mountain West to energize the party in what strategists say will be a crucial area for Democratic growth in future elections.

"It's a stage that will launch our nominee in a way that sends a message that the Democratic Party is broadening its scope and going to compete very, very strongly in the West," Debbie Willhite, executive director of the Denver 2008 Convention Host Committee, told [CQPolitics.com](#).

Democrats, whose presidential candidates have for years had to rely mostly on the states of the Northeast, upper Midwest and Pacific Coast for their base of electoral support, are hailing recent gains they say are eroding the Republicans' longterm and strong grip on the Interior West.

In Colorado alone, Democrat Bill Ritter this year captured the governor's seat left open by retiring Republican [Bill Owens](#); Democrat Ed Perlmutter won the 7th Congressional District seat that Republican Rep. Bob Beauprez left open to run for governor, a win that gave the Democrats a 4-3 edge in the state's House delegation; and the party maintained the holds on both chambers of the state legislature that it had won in 2004.

New York hardly has to build up its reputation as a Democratic powerhouse. Although the Republican Party chose to hold its 2004 convention there — a decision made in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center — the city gave 75 percent of its presidential vote that year to Democratic nominee [John Kerry](#).

New York Sen. [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) and gubernatorial nominee [Eliot Spitzer](#) won landslide victories for the Democrats this November, and party pickups of three formerly Republican House seats boosted the Democrats to a 23-6 advantage in the state's House delegation.

But Willhite, while conceding that New York would probably produce a “great convention,” said “there's no news” surrounding that selection. Instead, the reaction might be, “Democratic Party goes to New York ... again,” said Willhite.

Many observers expected DNC Chairman [Howard Dean](#), the former governor of Vermont and a contender for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination, to make a final decision earlier this month. But Willhite said officials in both contending cities are still in the process of finalizing the draft contracts sent to them by the DNC, according to Willhite.

Contracts are likely to include agreements regarding hotel room reservations, transportation, and main convention locations, which would be the Pepsi Center in downtown Denver and Madison Square Garden in the central New York City borough of Manhattan.

One of the biggest questions raised about Denver — especially by those favoring a pick of New York City — is whether the Western city really has the accommodations needed to host the convention. New York City, population 8 million, is a tourist magnet. Denver, population 555,000, is much less so.

But Denver's host committee, which estimates that the convention will draw 35,000 visitors, states that they are currently holding nearly

19,000 hotel rooms for participants. The committee's Web site boasts an expected \$150 to \$200 million in "economic benefits" gained from hosting the convention.

Meanwhile, the [Republican National Committee](#) is expected to ratify its site selection committee's choice of Minneapolis-St. Paul at its winter meeting in Washington next month.

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